

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

ORFEO MAJNUN



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

PRESS FILE

ORFEO & MAJNUN

According to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the story of Layla and Majnun

PARCOURS – LOVE, LOSS & LONGING

JUN 30th – 15:30

CITY CENTRE BRUSSELS / LA MONNAIE

&

MUSIC THEATRE – ORFEO & MAJNUN

DICK VAN DER HARST, HOWARD MOODY, MONEIM ADWAN

Libretto by MARTINA WINKEL

Poetic translation into Arabic by FATENA AL-GHORRA

Conductor BASSEM AKIKI

Concept and Directors AIRAN BERG and MARTINA WINKEL

With the participation of numerous citizens, schools and organizations in Brussels

WORLD PREMIERE

JUN 29th – 20:00

JUN 30th – 14:00 & 20:00

LA MONNAIE

DELEGATED PRODUCER: La Monnaie / De Munt (June 2018)

CO-PRODUCERS : Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (July 2018), European Capital of Culture Valletta 2018
(Oct. 2018), Wiener Konzerthaus (June 2019), Krakow International Festival (March 2020),
Operadagen Rotterdam (May 2019), S.M. FEIRA Imaginarius (May 2020)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF Creative Europe, Engie, VGC, Francophones Bruxelles, STIB/MIVB and the
Cercle Des Amis du 27 Mars (an initiative of Didier & Myriam de Callatay)



LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

INTRO

Orfeo & Majnun is a transnational cooperation project supported by the ‘Creative Europe’ programme. It draws inspiration from the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the famous Arab love story of Layla and Majnun, which have inspired the opera tradition in the Occident and the Middle East, respectively. The end result of the project is a transcultural, participatory music theatre project, which will be staged at La Monnaie in June 2018 and will be complemented by a parcours and a number of fringe events. The different partner institutions from all over Europe – the Wiener Konzerthaus (Austria), the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence (France), the European Capital of Culture Valletta 2018 (Malta), Operadagen Rotterdam (the Netherlands), the Krakow Festival Office (Poland), and the MSMFeira (Portugal) – can decide to either focus on one of these specific modules or to realize the entire project in their own city. The first part, which includes the parcours and activities linked to it, will be different in every city, thanks to the material and the actions developed by the citizens. The second part, the music theatre, will be rerun in the different partner cities by the artistic team leading the project at La Monnaie, with local artists and choristers.

IN BRUSSELS: A COMMUNITY PROJECT IN TWO ACTS

As the initiator and driving force behind this project, La Monnaie will be part of the entire process, thereby continuing its rich tradition of community projects.

PART ONE – PARCOURS Love, Loss and Longing

A first participative part has been gathering citizens of all ages and backgrounds for a period of several months. The combination of the two stories coming from the Occident and the Middle East and their deeply human themes provide an ideal ground for an intercultural dialogue focusing on mutual understanding and respect, but also for a real artistic collaboration between communities, thanks to the collaborative creation processes. This part wants to show the expression of the diversity of the communities. Individuals or communities, they all have talents that can be expressed. Workshops focusing on singing, music, gesture, theatre, masks, shadow-theatre and videos take place in schools, in cultural or community centers and in public spaces. They are all based on both stories and allow the participants to express their creativity and artistic sensibility. To make this first part a success, La Monnaie worked together with many local partners. It will come to an end on June 30th, with a large scale parcours organized in public spaces (around and within the workshops of La Monnaie) as a platform for the presentation of the different projects developed by the citizens in collaboration with professional local and international artists. In that parcours there will be indoor and outdoor spaces dedicated to performances/presentations of all kinds happening at regular intervals. It will be combined with the procession of the animals built by the participants.

PART TWO – MUSIC THEATRE Orfeo & Majnun

The two stories will fuse into a music theatre production, sung in English (Orpheus & Eurydice) and Arabic (Layla & Majnun) and interpreted by a narrator/story-teller (in the local language), where the various cultural elements, styles of music and languages echo each other. The orchestra will consist of both western instruments as well as oriental musical instruments connecting the two worlds. The visual language of the production will use shadow-theatre techniques as well as live video images created in real time.

Elements of participation in the performance include the Chorus (among which amateur choruses, La Monnaie’s Children’s and Youth Chorus, the Brussels Experimental, etc.), the manipulation of the animals and the creation of shadows and the live videos.

More information about the process and activities on orfeoandmajnun.eu

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

ARTISTIC TEAM

Main collaborators and workshop volunteers are too many to be all named in the present press file. However, here below are the ‘professionals’ who will supervise the participative creation process.

CONCEPT AND DIRECTORS

Airan Berg, who is a theatre maker by profession, has developed numerous large-scale participatory since he was nominated as Artistic Director for Performing Arts for European Capital of Culture Linz09. He are responsible for the design of the project, numerous theatre workshops, putting together the procession/parcours (Part 1), and co-directing the staged production (Part 2).

Martina Winkel, who is a writer, director, and shadow puppeteer has written and directed numerous productions and has written the Libretto for the opera *Kepler* by Philip Glass. She was also part of numerous participatory educational projects in Austria, Holland, and Belgium. She are responsible for the Libretto and co-directing of the music theatre piece (Part 2), set design and live shadow elements, as well as writing and shadow puppetry workshops.

COMPOSERS

Three composers will collaborate on Orfeo & Majnun as different skills are needed to create music for the procession/parcours and the participatory choir (Part 1) and the music theatre piece (Part 2), which combines Western and Oriental/Arabic music and singing styles.

Howard Moody is a composer with vast experience in participatory projects. He is responsible for music workshops and the musical guidance of the Parcours, as well as the musical numbers for the participatory choir, which will be heard in both parts.

Dick van der Harst is a composer and musician, who has worked intensively with musicians from different cultures. He is responsible for the overall composition and orchestrations of the music of Part 2.

The Arabic composer, oud player, and singer **Moneim Adwan** will contribute to the vocal lines for the Arabic characters and orchestrations for the Arabic musical numbers. All three musicians will also hold workshops for local communities and schools.

CONDUCTOR

Bassem Akiki is a young Polish-Lebanese conductor, nominated in 2016 for the International Opera Award in the category Best Young Conductor. He will conduct a mixed orchestra made up of the musicians of the Mediterranean Youth Orchestra and local musicians in each city. He has great experience with music from the East and the West and can communicate with both the Arabic and English singing soloists in their mother tongues.

SOLOISTS

Eurydice will be interpreted by French soprano **Judith Fa**, graduated from the Dutch National Opera Academy and l'Académie de l'Opéra Comique in Paris. Emphasizing the contemporary repertoire, she created the title role of *Mimi* (Frédéric Verrières) at le Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord and in Aix-en-Provence, as well as the Ohama (*Les Contes de la lune vague après la pluie*, Xavier Dayer) at l'Opéra de Rouen and at l'Opéra Comique. This season, she participates to the creation of *La légende du roi dragon* (Arthur Lavandier) at l'Opéra de Lille.

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

Palestinian singer, flautist and composer **Nai Barghouti** will play Layla. She graduated from the Palestinian Conservatory Edward Said when she was 14 and started a professional career as a singer with Munyati, a classic Tarab Arabic music programme. In 2013, she performed a concert at the UN headquarters for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and became the first flautist of the Palestine Youth Orchestra.

The tragic poet and singer Orfeo, will be performed by **Yoann Dubruque**. The young French baritone won the Jeune Espoir Award from the Concours international de chant lyrique in Vivonne. Over the next seasons, he will play Masetto (*Don Giovanni*, Mozart) at Bern Konzert Theater, Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart) at l'Opéra Grand Avignon, Horace (*Hamlet*, Thomas) at l'Opéra Comique of Paris, Borilé (*Les Boréades*, Rameau) at l'Opéra de Dijon with Emmanuelle Haïm and le Marquis (*Maître Péronilla*, Offenbach) at le Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

THE STORIES

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

The ancient singer-poet Orpheus, who, as the son of the muse Calliope and, in some interpretations, of the God Apollo, was in the imagination of the ancient Greeks not only the best singer of his legendary time but also the very creator/cultural hero of dance and singing. Therefore it made perfect sense to let the myth revolving around him and his love Eurydice play a major role at the birth of the opera as a new art form in the Renaissance.

The story is well known and has been paraphrased in various philosophical interpretations and artistic genres: when Eurydice, the beloved wife of the famous singer Orpheus dies after their wedding, he decides to follow her to the realm of the dead and, moving the gods of the underworld by his music, is allowed to take her back to the world of the living. He breaks the strict rule, that he must not look at her on their way, by turning back, thus losing her a second time. He retreats to the mountains, where animals gather around him listening to his songs, and is finally killed by a group of worshippers of Dionysus. His instrument, the lyre, is transported up to the night sky as a configuration of stars.

LAYLA AND MAJNUN

This famous romance, almost completely unknown to a western European public, was written down by the poet Nezami in 1188 as the Farsi version of an older pre-islamic Arab-Bedouin legend and its variations, telling the probably true story of the poet Qays, who turned 'majnun', meaning 'crazy', due to his passion for beautiful Layla. Majnun and Layla fall in love with each other at a young age, but her family forbids any contact between them and marries her to another man. She refuses conjugality, while Majnun never gets married, retreats to the wilderness and turns into a crazy poet of passionate love songs. After her death he wilts away, mourned by the animals which had become his peaceful companions.

In 1908 the tale provided the libretto for the first Middle East opera by the young Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov. This opera was performed in Baku; numerous other compositions and musical interpretations of the story have followed since. The story of these star-crossed lovers has been interpreted in various ways either as a secular love story or a mystical-religious allegory and has spread over the centuries in many languages and versions, from poems, epics, ballads to pop songs and Bollywood movies.

TRANSCENDING

As the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice stands at the beginning of the art form of western opera, the emblematic pair of lovers, Layla and Majnun, are the protagonists of the first opera of Middle Eastern culture. Orpheus & Majnun have become the very personification of the beauty

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

and the emotionalizing power of singing, music and poetry. Praise and lamentation, joy and mourning, love, loss and longing are mingled in their poetry, as they live in a transitional paradox presence stretched out between a past conjuringly remembered, and an absence filled with yearning and projections, between memory and dream.

Like Orpheus, Majnun pours his pain and passion into poetry, sharing his verses with the wild nature and its creatures. Both singer-poets retreat to the wilderness, both pour their passion and sorrow into beautiful poetry and songs, both are joined by animals as their sole companions. While Orpheus is separated from his wife Eurydice by death, for the young Arab Majnun, his love Layla was already unreachable while still alive, with death parting and uniting them in the end. The story speaks of basic, essential human experiences: love, existential loss, and mourning. It tells of death, memory, and the costs of survival.

Just as important is the gender question, the often jinxed relationship between lovers and the jammed roles of male and female in society and the arts, as well as the disturbing and mysterious relationship between Eros & Thanatos. The role of the two women differs: unlike Eurydice, whose voice is not heard in the ancient myth, Layla is just as eloquent as Majnun writing poems and songs about her love for Majnun while she endures the fate of a woman, who cannot live the life she is longing for. The opera gives a strong voice to Eurydice and Layla putting the two women in the center of the narration and telling the stories from their perspective, while also referring to the role and rights of women within the different cultures.

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

CAST

PARCOURS Love, Loss and Longing

With the participation of numerous citizens, schools and organizations in Brussels

MUSIC THEATRE Orfeo & Majnun

Conductor BASSEM AKIKI

Concept and director AIRAN BERG & MARTINA WINKEL

Libretto by MARTINA WINKEL

Poetic translation into Arabic by FATENA AL-GHORRA

Composers DICK VAN DER HARST, HOWARD MOODY & MONEIM ADWAN

Design puppets ROGER TITLEY

Choreography MARTA CORONADO

Lighting LUC SCHALTIN

Sound DANIEL LEON

Video DAAN MILLIUS

General direction Community Chorus & Parcours PETER SPAEPEN & FLORIS LAMMENS

Chorus master Children's and Youth Chorus BENOIT GIAUX

Eurydice JUDITH FA

Layla NAI BARGHOUTI

Orpheus YOANN DUBRUQUE

Majnun NN

LA MONNAIE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ENSEMBLE INTERCULTUREL DE L'ORCHESTRE DES JEUNES DE LA MEDITERRANEE

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

PARTNERS

GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS involved so far in Brussels

GC de Kriekelaar
Are these Waves
Atelier de Alphabetisation et le Photoclub / Centre Culturel de Ganshoren, La Villa
Atelier de Menuiserie, la Maison des Hommes et WebTV / Foyer vzw
Brede School Helmet (Heilige Familie Schaarbeek & Champagnat Instituut)
Brussels Brecht-Eislerkoor (BBEK)
Brussels Experimental
Brussels Ouderenplatform (BOP) vzw
Calame asbl
Caleidoscoop / GC Vaartkapoen, Palhik Mana vzw
Centre Culturel Wolubilis / Ateliers du Temps Libre
Change asbl
Choir Zamâan AWSA / Awsa - Arab Women's solidarity association - Belgium
Circus Zonder Handen
City Zoom / Pianofabriek, Piazza Dell' Arte, Gemeente Sint-Gillis / Commune de Saint-Gilles
GC Pianofabriek
Globearoma
Home Heydeken
Instituut Van de Ursulinen (Koekelberg)
Jetse academie Muziek-Woord-Dans
KoorMAchorale / Labolobo asbl, GC De Zeyp
Le Silex asbl
Master Gestion Culturelle / ULB
On the Road / Centre Croix-Rouge de Manhay, Pianofabriek
Psycho-Sociaal Centrum Sint-Alexius-Elsene
The Sound of Water's Footsteps
Toile CiREe / GC Essegem
Urban Woorden
USSAQ / KULeuven, Faculty of Arts. Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies,
Leuven Language Institute (ILT KULeuven)
VoiceKontakt / GC Kontakt

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

OTHER PARTNERS

Muntpunt
Service public francophone bruxellois
Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie
Cercle d'Amis du 27 Mars
The Dominican Hotel Brussels

WITH THE PARTICIPATION of 27 students from the Instituut van de Ursulinen (Koekelberg)

General manager CARINE TIMMERMANS
Team La Monnaie TINEKE VANDENHOUDT
MIEKE SEGERS
ELISABETH ALDERS
PIETER-JAN VERHOYEN (repetitor)

This project in the Institute of Ursulines has the support of the VGC.

ENGIE

The **ENGIE** Group is a trustworthy partner of La Monnaie since 1994. This partnership was first meant as a support to cultural creation, but has since then an additional societal dimension. ENGIE is indeed also a partner of the social program of La Monnaie called “A Bridge between two Worlds”. Thanks to this program, people from underprivileged neighborhoods gain access to cultural events. This common value between La Monnaie and the ENGIE Foundation enhances the realization of lots of projects in favor of inclusion of young people through culture, sport or education. The ENGIE Foundation was created in France in 2010, but it also supports 34 projects in favor of youngsters in Belgium since 2013. More than 50,000 youngsters from the 3 regions of Belgium have already benefitted from these projects.

La Monnaie and its partners including ENGIE have launched their “Community Project” parallel to the opera “Orfeo and Majnun”. This original project is built as a journey full of cultural discoveries for youngsters who are part of La Monnaie’s partner associations and of the ENGIE Foundation. This journey will lead them to the performance of “Orfeo and Majnun” at La Monnaie on June 30th. Thanks to this cooperation, ENGIE wishes to enhance its corporate responsibility towards Society as a whole through initiatives that are set up in close partnership with local recognized stakeholders, like La Monnaie.

LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

GENERAL INFORMATION

PARCOURS Love, Loss and Longing

Saturday June 30th 2018, from 15:30 till 19:30

MUSIC THEATRE Orfeo & Majnun

Friday June 29th 2018, 20:00

Saturday June 30th 2018, 14:00

Saturday June 30th 2018, 20:00

DELEGATED PRODUCER: La Monnaie / De Munt (June 2018)

CO-PRODUCERS : Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (July 2018), European Capital of Culture Valletta 2018 (Oct. 2018), Wiener Konzerthaus (June 2019), Krakow International Festival

(March 2020), Operadagen Rotterdam (May 2019), S.M. FEIRA Imaginarius (May 2020)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF Creative Europe, Engie, VGC, Francophones Bruxelles, STIB/MIVB and the Cercle Des Amis du 27 Mars (an initiative of Didier & Myriam de Callataÿ)



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



LA MONNAIE / DE MUNT

CONTACT AND PRESS WEBSITE

Camille Philippot Press officer a.i.

+32 (0)2 210 84 65

c.philippot@lamonnaie.be

JOSE LUIS VILLALOBOS Production manager

+32 (0)2 229 13 75

j-l.villalobos@lamonnaie.be

WEBSITE

<https://orfeoandmajnun.eu>

<https://www.lamonnaie.be/press/>

Press files, program books and photos from the production and of the cast are at your disposal on our press website.

User: mmpress

Password: OrpheuS

ARCHIVES carmen.lamonnaie.be

On the website C.a.r.m.e.n. you can find information and **biographies** of all the performers and **productions** seen at La Monnaie.